

# **Lisa Duff**

What characterises the Australian film industry and film making culture in the period 1989 – 2005 and has the global film industry in Australia had an impact on it?

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### Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text. I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.



Signature of Candidate:

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and strokes, positioned to the right of the "Signature of Candidate:" text.

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## **Table of Abbreviations**

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Commission.
AD	Assistant Director.
AFC	Australian Film Commission.
AFI	Australian Film Institute.
AFDC	Australian Film Development Corporation.
DOP	Director of Photography.
FFC(A)	Film Finance Corporation Australia.
FLICS	Film Licensed Investment Company.
MEAA	Media Entertainment Arts Alliance.
MFC	Macquarie Film Corporation.
SBS	Special Broadcasting Service.
SPAA	Screen Producers' Association Australia.
TNC	Trans-national Corporation.

## **Chronology**

### **1970**

- *Australian Film Development Corporation (AFDC)* established. Australian film industry revival begins.

### **1973**

- *Australian Content Regulations for TV* replaced by a points system aimed at achieving more and better quality Australian TV programming.
- *The Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS)* is opened as part of the Commonwealth Government's strategy to promote the development of Australia's cultural activity.

### **1975**

- *AFDC* replaced by *Australian Film Commission (AFC)* by the Federal Government, to promote the creation and distribution of films in Australia as well as to preserve the country's film history. In 2007 it becomes part of the new government agency *Screen Australia*.

### **1980**

- Australian Government offers tax incentives *10BA* and *10B* for private investment in qualifying Australian film.

### **1983 - 1985**

- *10BA* and *10B* tax incentives scaled back.

### **1988**

- *Film Finance Corporation (FFC)*, established as the Australian Government's principal agency for funding the production of film and television in Australia as an alternative film funding mechanism to *10BA*.

## 1989

- Australia plunged into economic recession.

## 1991

- *Warners/Roadshow Studio Complex* opens on the Gold Coast.

## 1997

- The Federal Government's review of the film industry, known as the *Gonski Review* is published.

## 1998

- *Fox Studios Australia* opens in Sydney.

## 1999

- Australian Government announces Content Capital Ltd and Macquarie Film Corporation Pty Ltd would be awarded licences to raise finance for films under the *FLICS scheme*.

## 2001

- Government's *Film Assistance Package* announced.
- The AFC commissions a report into the impact of foreign film production in Australia on the local Australian film industry.

## 2002

- The introduction of the *Taxation Laws Amendment (Film Incentives) Bill* to Federal Parliament signals a 12.5% refundable tax offset against Australian production expenditure for larger budget films –as part of its *Integrated Film Package*.
- The looming writers and actors strike in the US brings a production craze and unprecedented number of film and TV projects green lit with much of LA, Canada & Australia working to capacity.



## 2002

- Fox Studios Backlot closure boosts studio space at Fox Studios.

## 2004

- Melbourne's *Docklands Studios* open.

## 2007

- *Bilateral Free Trade Agreement* between Australia and the US finalised.
- In May 2007, the Australian Government announced the creation of a new agency, the *Australian Screen Authority* known as *Screen Australia*. The new agency will be formed by the merger of the Australian Film Finance Corporation, Australian Film Commission (which includes the National Film and Sound Archive), and Film Australia, and will take effect on 1 July 2008.

## **Abstract**

This study is intended to examine Australian filmmaking culture and the state of the Australian film industry in the years 1989 – 2005 and to investigate the impact of increased foreign film production in Australia on it.

I have taken my research data from answers to questionnaires, interviews and surveys conducted during 2005/2006 with members of the Australian film industry: producers, directors, cast and crewmembers, working across both local and foreign films in Australia. These surveys serve as the basis of an evaluation of the differences between both film industries operating in Australia, the Local Australian and the global. Having produced an Australian feature film *Last Train to Freo* in 2005, I drew upon that experience and those of the cast and crew in a case study further examining the process of Australian feature film production and Australian filmmaking culture.

The research concludes that the proximity of the global film industry to the local Australian one is having a negative effect on the attitudes, expectations and working practices of Australian cast and crewmembers. Whilst on the increase however, foreign film production levels in Australia have not been consistent enough to offer cast and crews long-term sustainable employment.

With the production of a greater number of higher budget Australian films and the necessity for them to attract international investment in order to be made, comes pressure on filmmakers to make more internationally appealing films and less film culturally specific to the Australian experience and Australian audiences. It cannot be surmised from this however that our own Australian cultural film product or “national cinema” no longer has a place. Support for local Australian film remains strong amongst cast and crews and the Australian Government continues to protect it through its policy and funding. Despite this support however, no growth in local production in Australia has been seen for three decades, with local production in NSW at an all-time low in 2006.